Depot Town Rag

Volume 23, Number 5

July 2010

Always ready for another celebration!

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

A historic account

We celebrate our independence

WOODRUFF'S GROVE, 4 July 1824

(See the historical marker at the intersection of Prospect and Grove Roads)

[Benjamin] Woodruff, remembering his failure to arrive at the settlement with his family the previous year in time to observe July Fourth, determined that on Independence Day, 1824, nothing should be lacking in the celebration. Accordingly, he purchased in Detroit and brought up the river such necessary supplies as the settlement could not furnish. Among these were raisins, rice, cheese, loaf-sugar and a half-barrel of whiskey. Invitations were given all the residents of Washtenaw County of whom Woodruff had knowledge, thirty-eight in number.

Preparations for the dinner required the cooperation of the entire community. Mrs. Woodruff's stone oven was taxed to capacity for baking. A beef animal was killed and the meat roasted in two large kettles turned up before a log fire. Nearly all invited were present. John Phillips and Walter Oakman presumably had gone to Detroit for the celebration. Aside from the settlers already mentioned there were Judge Robert Fleming, who presided, the Indian Chief Blue Jacket, Arden H. Ballard, Orange Crane, Leonard Miller, J. Mahen, H. Mallett, J. Stoddard, Miss Mallett, and Miss Eiclor.

Before the meal was served Woodruff read the Declaration of Independence and made a patriotic address and all joined in singing "Hail Columbia." The dinner was spread out of doors on a table made of boards roughly hewn but covered with the finest home-made linen brought from Ohio or back East. *[Concluded overleaf]*

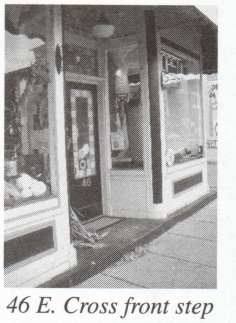
Red, white, and blue for the 4th!

McPherson & House: 1920

ABOVE: Those aren't parking meters along the sidewalk; they're cast iron hitching posts. Next door, at #52, L.A. Demke announces "Lunches" for "Ladies & Gents"

RIGHT: The front step into today's Enchanted Florist, at the same address, still carries the name "McPherson-House."

FAR RIGHT: Late-comers to this block may have thought the building was named "The McPherson House," but recent discoveries indicate a much more interesting story.



46 E. Cross front step

On closer inspection

We celebrate our 234th birthday

Ypsilanti folks are terribly sentimental about their holiday celebrations; Christmas window decor lines the street in December, May sees the Memorial Procession pause at the WWI markers on Cross Street Bridge before going north to the cemeteries, and July sees the annual Independence Day Parade with bands, veterans, and patriotic themes.

It's a grand tradition: in 1920, the McPherson & House Grocery at 46 East Cross Street showed their patriotism with red, white, and blue bunting accenting their building. Today, the Enchanted Florist fills the same windows with holiday-related themes still much appreciated by their clientele and passers-by.

We don't need to make up fake new holidays for a reason to celebrate the life of our community. The events of the past are every bit as exciting today as they were when the first settlers celebrated Independence Day in pre-Ypsilanti's Woodruff's Grove.

Fireworks, parades, barbecues, fairs, picnics, concerts, baseball games, political speeches, and general hoopla celebrate our history

The first public reading of the Declaration of Independence (Members of Congress leave Indepence Hall)

What are you doing on the Fourth? Everybody celebrate!

1777- Thirteen gunshots were fired, once at morning and again as evening fell, on July 4 in Bristol, Rhode Island. Philadelphia celebrated the first anniversary much like Depot Towners do today: an official dinner for the Continental Congress, toasts, 13-gun salutes, speeches, prayers, music, parades, troop reviews, and fireworks. Ships were decked with red, white, and blue bunting.

1778- General George Washington marked July 4 with a double ration of rum for his soldiers and an artillery salute. Across the Atlantic, ambassadors John Adams and Benjamin Franklin held a dinner for their fellow Americans in Paris.

1779- July 4 fell on a Sunday when the pious banned parties. The holiday was celebrated on Monday, July 5.

1781- The Massachusetts General Court became the first state legislature to recognize July 4 as a state celebration.

1783- Moravians in Salem, NC celebrate July 4 with a challenging music program assembled by Johann Friedrich Peter titled "The Psalm of Joy".

1791- The first recorded use of the name "Independence Day" occurred.

1820- The first Fourth of July celebration was held in Eastport, Maine which remains the largest in the state.

1870- Congress made Independence Day an unpaid holiday for federal employees.

1929- Ypsilanti's Independence Day Parade initiated

1938- Congress changed Independence Day to a paid federal holiday.

1824 Independence Day

[Continued from page one]

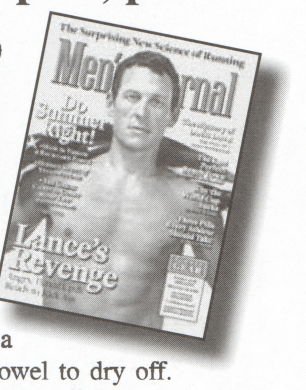
The food was satisfying. There were roast beef, chicken, new potatoes, green peas, beets, warm biscuits with butter and honey, cheese, rice and raisin puddings and loaf cake.

Elona Rogers and Ella Woodruff prepared the hot sling. As the task was new to them they were unmindful of their instructions, they put in a double portion of whiskey, a blunder which, as they suspected, was evidenced in a noticeable increase of liveliness and good humor. Dancing to the merry scraping of Mallett's violin prolonged the festivities into the evening.

[Harvey C. Colburn's The Story of Ypsilanti, 1923]

www.depottown.org

A little respect, please

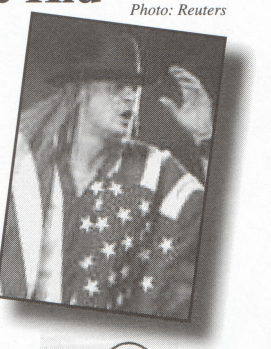


The cover of the June/July 2010 issue of *Men's Journal* features a photograph of Lance Armstrong with an American flag wrapped around his neck in the way a swimmer uses a towel to dry off.

Section 8d. of the Flag Code states, "The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free." SOURCE: USHistory.org

Forget about Janet; focus on the Kid

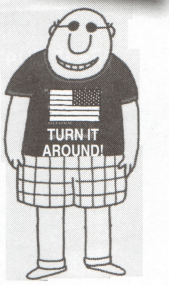
Photo: Reuters



Super Bowl 2004, Janet Jackson's "costume malfunction" made international news; that same half-time show featured the wearing of an American flag by performer Kid Rock. He later removed the flag poncho and hurled it over his head.

Section 8d. of the Flag Code reads, "The flag should never be used as wearing apparel."

Let's show a little respect for the flag!



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You can celebrate almost any day in July

You don't have to wait another year to celebrate Independence Day; there are at least nineteen of them this month and more throughout the year:

Burundi, 1 July 1962, from Belgium
Rwanda, 1 July 1962, from Belgium
Belarus, 3 July 1944, from Minsk
United States, 4 July 1776, from Kingdom of Great Britain
Cape Verde, 5 July 1975, from Portugal
Venezuela, 5 July 1811, from Spain
Algeria, 5 July 1962, from France
Malawi, 6 July 1964, from UK
Solomon Islands, 7 July 1976, from UK
Argentina, 9 July 1816, from Spain
Bahamas, 10 July 1973, from UK
Sao Tomé and Principe, 12 July 1975, from Portugal
Slovakia, 17 July 1993, from Czechoslovakia
Colombia, 20 July 1810, from Spain
Belgium, 21 July 1831, from Netherlands
Liberia, 26 July 1847, from the American Colonization Society
Maldives, 26 July 1965, from UK
Peru, 28 July 1821, from Spain
Vanuatu, 30 July 1980, from UK and France

Save the date for the big celebration

Oops! Wrong day

Legal separation of the American colonies from Great Britain actually happened on July 2, 1776, when the Second Continental Congress voted to approve a resolution of independence that had been proposed in June by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. After voting for independence, Congress turned its attention to the Declaration of Independence, a statement explaining this decision, which had been prepared by a Committee of Five, led by Thomas Jefferson. Congress debated and revised, finally approving it on July 4.

Take a note

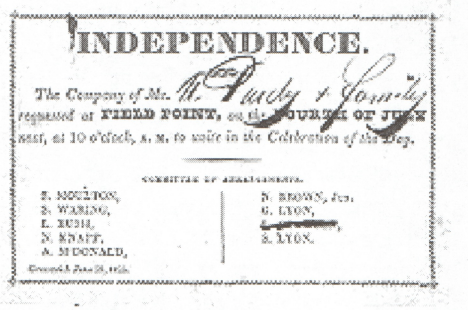
On July 3, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail:

"The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more."

Adams' prediction was off by two days. From the very beginning, Americans celebrated independence on July 4, the date shown on the much-publicized Declaration of Independence, rather than on July 2, the date the resolution of independence was approved in a closed session of Congress.

'Nother myth exposed

One of the most enduring myths about Independence Day is that Congress signed the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The myth had become so firmly established that, decades after the event, even the geezerly Thomas Jefferson and John Adams had come to believe that they and the others had signed the Declaration on the fourth. Most of them actually signed the Declaration on August 2, 1776. In a remarkable series of coincidences, both Adams and Jefferson, two founding fathers of the United States and the only two signers to become president, died on the same day: July 4, 1826, which was the United States' 50th anniversary.


INDEPENDENCE.

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An 1825 invitation to an Independence Day celebration

CALENDAR QUIZ:

Q: Do they have a 4th of July in England?

A: Yes. It's right after the 3rd of July.

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Woodward's "Dream Cruise" a longer ride than expected

Motor City's Woodward Avenue reaches all the way to Ypsilanti

Top: *Detroit's Woodward Avenue in 1908, later became the first paved highway in the U.S.*
Right: *Fink family's house at the corner of S. Washington & Woodward in Ypsilanti*

Not "toward the woods" as founder had claimed

Many Ypsilantians are well aware that, when Augustus Brevoort Woodward, first Justice of the Michigan Territory, volunteered to take the three suggested names for this new town to register them in the Michigan Territory capitol in Detroit, he dropped two of them (and that extraneous Greek 's') and filed "Ypsilanti" to commemorate the hero of the 1821 Greek war for independence from the Turks.

Woodward's earlier plan for rebuilding Detroit after the disastrous fire of 1805 was to name the main drag that extended from the Detroit River to the settlement of Pontiac for himself. But Gus Woodward was not so well commemorated when he later helped to register the new name for Woodruff's Grove when it moved a mile north. Sure, we named a street for the Justice, but it wasn't the main drag—and we spelled it wrong!

The street just two blocks south of Michigan Avenue was named for this early pioneer, but few recognized that it was erroneously spelled "Woodard" for many years.

Finally, in the 1970s, City officials had new signs erected and rectified the error.

The rest of the story:

1. Detroit's Woodward Dream Cruise began in 1995 and drew more than 250,000 people—ten times the number expected.

2. By the third year of Ypsilanti's annual Heritage Festival, the event was out-drawing the Michigan State Fair in daily attendance. In 2009, the State of Michigan withdrew support and, after 160 years, the oldest state fair in America ended. Established in 1840, the Michigan State Fair was cancelled, in spite of the *Michigan Exposition and Fairgrounds Authority Act 361 of 1978* which provides for its continuity.

3. Meanwhile, Depot Town's summer antique and vintage car events continue to outdraw similar Motor City events.

In the next *Rag*:

How does your garden grow... down in the old railroad district among cinders and chunks of coal? You may be surprised!

The famous MCRR depot greenhouse and gardens

Depot Town Rag

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The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
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The Depot Town Association, Inc.

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Michelle Shankwiler, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
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Website: www.depottown.org
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

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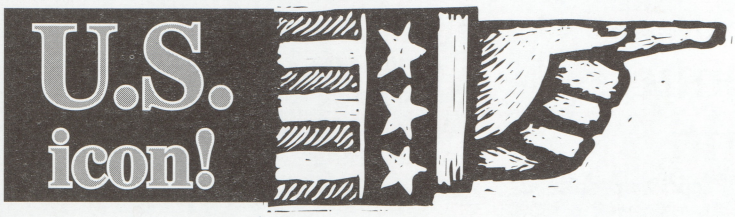

Iconic Uncle Sam was based on a real man

Thomas Nast's first Uncle Sam

James Montgomery Flagg's "Sam"

A businessman from Troy, New York, Samuel Wilson, provided the army with beef and pork in barrels during the War of 1812. The barrels were prominently labeled "U.S." for the United States, but it was jokingly said that the letters stood for "Uncle Sam." Soon, Uncle Sam was used as shorthand for the federal government.

The man himself looked nothing like the gaunt, steely-eyed patrician of popular lore. Uncle Sam was first portrayed in human form by cartoonist Frank Bellew in the March 13, 1852, issue of the *New York Lantern*. The Abe Lincoln look, along with the star-spangled outfit, was a product of political cartoonist Thomas Nast, who was one of the most popular artists of the 1800s. (Nast was also responsible for the popular images of Santa Claus, the Republican Elephant, and the Democratic Donkey).

The most famous image of the Uncle Sam persona was a World War I recruiting image that depicted a stern Sam pointing his finger at the viewer and declaring, "I want you". It was painted by artist James Montgomery Flagg in 1917, just prior to US involvement in World War I. *[from Wikipedia]*

The Uncle Sam Memorial Statue, Arlington, MA, memorializes Samuel Wilson's birthplace

46 E. Cross Street

Utilitarian hall tree has deep roots

If a hall tree stands in the window, will anybody recognize it? Only if it's on E. Cross Street.

Close inspection of the goods at McPherson & House finds Kellogg's Corn Flakes alongside Wheat Pep. Apples are five cents and a teepee of brooms draws customers to the back of the store. Canned good and glass containers dominate the tops of display shelves. What looks like the Kiwanis "K" sits atop large bags of flour or salt. On the right beneath artfully stacked cans is the cigar counter with La Paloma and San Felice Little Cigars. Hard rolls are shown in a glass container and in the open air. And the bare wood floor brings back that great smell of the old A&P.

July 1920: McPherson & House Grocery staff. Note the barber pole in front of what is the Hair Station today!

July 2010: Enchanted Florist: Lauren Watts, Kristen Wolfe, Drew Wallick, Kalhi, Laura Lanzon-Wallick w/ Lucas Wallick, Jill Haken

As with the rest of the block, local relic still in use here

McPherson & House discovery started with a simple stick of wood

Sidetrack/Frenchie's Linda French bought a coat rack/hall tree last fall from Linda Bankausas. The latter Linda wrote the former Linda the following note:

"My mother was not too eager to sell the coat rack.....until I told her where it might likely be used. You see in the early 1920s, my mother, Marjorie Haskins, frequently visited her aunt and uncle, Harry and Lena Sutherland, who lived at 46 E. Cross Street. Her Aunt Lena's maiden name was House, and Aunt Lena's mother's maiden name was McPherson. Those two families ran a general store in the first floor of that building and lived in the third (or second) floor. If you look at the stone in front of the door at 46 E. Cross it says "McPherson-House."

"The point of that story is that my mom is happy to know that the coat rack that was in her home as child may end up in a location near where she has many memories, and is consequently willing to sell it."

The McPherson & House hall tree is now used regularly, just inside the front door of Frenchie's—just three doors east of its original location.

[Thanks to both these Lindas for the period photos to go with the story.]

Hear that lonesome whistle blow!

SEMCOG says the commuter train is still on its way

Like a watched pot that just won't boil, the proposed commuter train connecting Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Metro Airport, Dearborn, and Detroit, still cannot be heard coming down the tracks. End-of-Winter official reports from City representatives indicated the train would be here by October. *A2.com* has since reported its arrival "by the end of the year." Now it appears the politicos are adjusting to new standards of Washington hand-outs and the commuter's arrival is postponed until they figure out access to the largesse.

In the old days, train watchers were so excited about the arrival of a new train that the whole town would turn out to walk along the tracks heralding its initial arrival and escort the consist of engine, tenders, cars, and caboose into town.

The proposed commuter, made up of reconditioned cars, may not look like the train above, but it will certainly be worthy of a community escort when it arrives.

How about we hand out flowers, again, to the passengers who disembark in Depot Town? Looks like we'll have plenty of time to plan a big welcoming party.

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RAGTIME Coming events

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July 3
Independence Day Parade

July 23-24
Michigan Brewers Guild
13th Annual Summer Beer Festival
Friday 5-8 p.m., Saturday 1-6 p.m.
Riverside Park

Tuesday nights
All summer long
Motorcycle Mania
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Riverside Park

August 20, 21, 22
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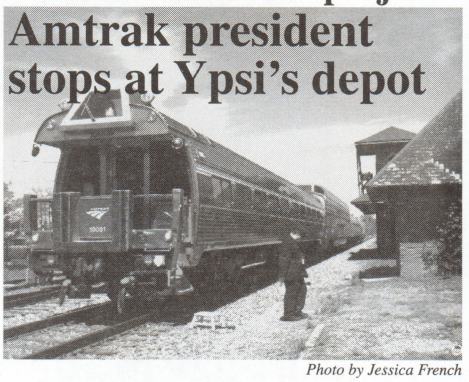

Photo by Jessica French

14 May 2010, YPSILANTI, MI

When a three-car passenger train stopped at the decrepit MCRR depot in Ypsilanti in May, locals marveled at the gritty condition of what must have been deluxe rail accomodations in an earlier time. An unmarked diesel engine led a full-length dome car and was concluded by what appeared to be a highly polished Amtrak coach with a rear platform not seen at this rail yard since U.S. President Harry Truman's last visit here.

On board was the president of Amtrak on his way from Detroit to Chicago. Amtrak boss Joseph Boardman was accompanied by a full set of liveried Pullman-style porters, conductors, and various other uniformed attendants as they looked over the neighborhood for a short time on that pleasant afternoon.

After meeting with Amtrak and other City officials, Councilmember Peter Murdock noted, "Discretionary funding is being discussed as a major component in federal reauthorization. As a result, the level of future transportation funding for us in Southeast Michigan may depend on how well our projects address national priorities. The leadership of our delegation will be key if Michigan is to have an opportunity to receive an appropriate share of the funds we already send to Washington. It will also be important for communities and agencies in Southeast Michigan to invest in projects across the entire spectrum of transportation infrastructure – highway, transit, HSR, biking and walking, etc., if we are to be successful, both today and in the future."

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